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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 524

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Father William J.
Fleming of Nashville.

WHEREAS, it was with great sadness and a profound sense of loss that the members of this General Assembly and the citizens of Tennessee learned of the untimely passing of Father William J. Fleming; and

WHEREAS, Father Fleming was an outstanding person who performed his religious duties with extraordinary dedication and unprecedented devotion, giving unselfishly of himself, his time and his talents for the greater good of his family and friends, his faith and the greater Nashville community; and

WHEREAS, Bill Fleming was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens and his parishioners in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, throughout his remarkable life, Father Fleming performed his religious duties with remarkable diligence and dexterity; his ability and spirituality should serve as benchmarks for other priests and religious leaders to emulate; and

WHEREAS, a longtime resident of Davidson County, Father Fleming was a highly respected member of the Nashville community; and

WHEREAS, Bill Fleming served with acumen and alacrity as Pastor of the Cathedral of the Incarnation, in which position he earned the respect of his peers and diocesan leaders alike for the superior quality of his Christian service and the depth and sincerity of his faith; and

WHEREAS, born on September 21, 1931, Bill Fleming was the only child of the late William and Agnes Fleming; and

WHEREAS, after attending Cathedral School and Father Ryan High School and honorably serving his active ministry in Nashville, Father Fleming became a beloved loved and respected pillar of the community; and

WHEREAS, he briefly left his hometown to attend St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Iowa and the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, Father Fleming answered his higher calling on May 24, 1958, when he was ordained at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Chattanooga by the distinguished Bishop William L. Adrian; and

WHEREAS, during his laudable career, Father Fleming rendered astute service as the assistant and/or associate pastor of Cathedral of the Incarnation, the St. Edward Parish, St. Joseph Parish of Madison and St. Henry Parish; and

WHEREAS, he was also the pastor at Holy Rosary and the estimable chaplain of St. Thomas Hospital, the Little Sisters of the Poor, St. Bernard Convent, St. Bernard Academy and Separated and Divorced Catholics; and

WHEREAS, Bill Fleming diligently carried out the Lord's work as the chairman of the First and Second Presbyteral Councils and the Board of Directors of the Diocesan-assisted living facility to be named, Mary, Queen of Angels; and

WHEREAS, an enlightened religious leader with great foresight, Father Fleming admirably served as the Episcopal Vicar for Catholic Charities in 1987 and as the Associate Vocation Director for the Nashville Deanery from 1985 - 1991; and

WHEREAS, he enjoyed a sterling tenure as a distinguished member of the First, Second, and Fourth Presbyteral Councils and the College of Consultors; and

WHEREAS, a pioneer in the Catholic faith, Father Fleming reached out to attend to the spiritual needs of the Catholic community in 1969 when he co-founded the Community of Christian Unity, a "floating parish" that owned no property, and whose members gathered together at different locations for each meeting. This unique congregation served as a spiritual outlet for disaffected Catholics and implemented new practices now considered to be mainstream, such as the handshake of peace and receiving the communion hosts in their hands; and

WHEREAS, truly a man for all seasons, Bill Fleming was actively involved in the civil rights movement during the 1960s, working through the diocese's Project Equality. He maintained a strong commitment to social and racial justice throughout his exemplary life; and

WHEREAS, Father Bill Fleming gave unreservedly of himself to develop this state's most precious resource, our children, as a teacher at Father Ryan High School from 1958 – 1971 and as principal during the 1973-74 school year; he was also a highly popular and erudite professor at Aquinas College; and

WHEREAS, Father Fleming was an articulate and eloquent communicator who possessed a rare ability to answer complex theological questions with clarity, and other priests often turned to him for advice and direction; and

WHEREAS, his open heart, indomitable spirit, and stalwart ethics endeared him to his parishioners as a humble servant of God and "a priest of the people in the pews"; and

WHEREAS, Father Fleming was an avid sports fan and eternal optimist, who was devoted to the Chicago Cubs and Vanderbilt football team; and

WHEREAS, Father Bill Fleming has left this world for a far better one, where he will reap the reward for his tireless lifelong efforts – the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven; and

WHEREAS, Father Fleming's unparalleled legacy of courage, boundless energy, and religious devotion will forever be etched in the hearts and minds of his beloved parishioners; and

WHEREAS, Bill Fleming is survived by his aunt, Lenore Ryan of Chicago, and several cousins; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the celebrated life of this exceptional Christian servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of Father William J. Fleming, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life and performing God's work with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our deepest sympathy and offer our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Father Bill Fleming.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.